



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the Chief
Information Officer

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

June 21, 2019

Delivered via Electronic Mail

Austin R. Evers
Executive Director
American Oversight
1030 15th Street NW
Suite B255
Washington, DC 20005
foia@americanoversight.org

**Re: First Interim Response for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
Request No. 2019-DA-03591-F**

Dear Mr. Evers:

This is the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Departmental FOIA Office's (DFO's) first interim response to the above-referenced FOIA request, which has been assigned FOIA tracking number 2019-DA-03591-F. Your request is being processed under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552. A copy of your request is enclosed for your convenience.

A search was conducted by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) telecommunications provider Client Experience Center (CEC). This provider performs network services for OCIO to include electronic messaging operations, electronic calendars, blackberry, mobile device management (MDM), file and print, remote access, voice, network, service desk, and other application services. The CEC conducted searches of the email accounts of Secretary Sonny Perdue, Stephen Censky, Heidi Green, Ray Starling, Stephen Vaden, Tyler Clarkson, Inga Bumbary-Langston, Richard Goeken, Ken Barbic, Evan Lee, Robert MacGregor, Lillie Brady, Veronica Wong, Anna Osterlind, Erin Wilson, Leon Striker, Noah Jackson, Joby Young, Blake Rollins, Carly Miller, Henry Bridgeforth, Jordan Bonfitto, Kailee Tkacz, Robyn Whitney, Brock Densel, Misty Giles, Peter Bachmann, Kelsey Barnes, and Lindsey Moore between January 20, 2017 and the date the search was commenced, on or about May 13, 2019.

The first interim response consists of 23 pages of records. Following a review of the responsive records, the DFO has determined that certain information contained therein should be withheld pursuant to FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). Below is an explanation of the information that has been withheld.

The DFO is continuing to process the remainder of your request.

Austin R. Evers
2019-DA-03591-F

FOIA Exemption 6

Exemption 6 generally is referred to as the “personal privacy” exemption. It provides that the disclosure requirements of FOIA do not apply to “personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6). Application of the exemption involves balancing the public’s interest in disclosure against individuals’ privacy interests. The relevant public interest for this balancing test is whether release of the information would shed light on governmental activities.

The responsive records meet the threshold of “similar files” because they contain information identifying individuals. The information withheld under Exemption 6 consists of the mobile telephone numbers of individuals, telephone conference bridge access codes, a reference to personal hobbies, and signatures of non-government individuals.

These individuals have a strong privacy interest in their mobile telephone numbers because release could subject the individuals to unwanted or unsolicited communications. Similarly, individuals who use telephone conference bridge lines for confidential communications have a strong privacy interest in protecting access to those conversations. Individuals also have a strong privacy interest in their personal activities outside of work. Finally, individuals have a strong privacy interest in their signatures which could be improperly used for identity theft.

With regard to the public interest, release of this information will not add to the public’s understanding of governmental activities; accordingly there is no public interest in release. Because there is a significant privacy interest that would be threatened by disclosure and because the DFO has not identified any public interest, Exemption 6 authorizes this office to withhold the information.

The DFO continues to process your FOIA request and will issue a final response. The final response letter will advise you of your appeal rights for all records released in response to your request, including this interim response.

You may seek dispute resolution services from the DFO’s FOIA Public Liaison, Ms. Ravoyne Payton at USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov.

You also have the option to seek assistance from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS). The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001; email at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll-free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

Austin R. Evers
2019-DA-03591-F

Provisions of the FOIA allow us to recover part of the cost of processing your request. In this instance, no fees will be charged because you were granted a fee waiver on October 25, 2018.

If you have any questions regarding the processing of this request, please contact Brooke Geller at brooke.geller@usda.gov or USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov. For additional information regarding USDA FOIA regulations and processes, please refer to the information available online at www.dm.usda.gov/foia.

The DFO appreciates the opportunity to assist you with this matter.

Sincerely,

Alexis R. Graves
Departmental FOIA Officer
Office of the Chief Information Officer

Enclosures: FOIA Request No. 2019-DA-03591-F
Responsive Records (23 pages)

From: [Young, Joby - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Zinda, Landon](#)
Subject: Re: Letter to Sec. Perdue
Date: Tuesday, March 13, 2018 11:05:53 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

Received. And absolutely can talk. I'd like to bring our twin metals point person in if that works. Let me check availability and I will circle back asap.

Joby Young
Chief of Staff
Office of Congressional Relations
United States Department of Agriculture
Mobile: (b) (6)

Please excuse brevity and typos
Sent from my iPhone

> On Mar 13, 2018, at 5:05 PM, Zinda, Landon <Landon.Zinda@mail.house.gov> wrote:
>
> Joby,
>
> Hope you're doing well. If you could, please refer this letter from Congressmen Emmer, Lewis, and Peterson to the Secretary.
>
> Would it be possible to set up a time to talk as well? Either over the phone or in person works for me. Just want to make the connection and explain a little bit of our thinking.
>
> Thanks.
>
> Landon Zinda
> Deputy Legislative Director
> Congressman Tom Emmer (MN-06)
> Office: (202) 225-2331
> Sign up for Rep. Emmer's Newsletter<<http://goo.gl/k2atvi>>
> [cid:image001.png@01D158F7.64E8A670]<<https://www.facebook.com/reptomemmer>>
[cid:image002.png@01D158F7.64E8A670] <<https://twitter.com/reptomemmer>>
[cid:image003.png@01D158F7.64E8A670] <<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCScZcPwdddt6ffxbRLFQVw>>
> <image001.png>
> <image002.png>
> <image003.png>
> <03122018_SecPerdueLetterWithdrawal.pdf>

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From: [Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Zinda, Landon; Casamassa, Glenn -FS; Roessing, Megan - FS; Flory, Suzanne C -FS; Thomas, Ryan - OSEC, Washington DC](#)
Subject: Call with Landon Zinda (Rep. Emmer) to discuss M-Opinion; Twin Metals, MN
Importance: High

Conference line: 888-544-9904

Participant Access Code: **(b) (6)**

This call is to discuss the Forest Service process regarding the M-Opinion for Twin Metals Mine, MN. A further interagency coordination call will be set up in the coming weeks between USDA's Forest Service, Department of Interior and Representative Emmer's staff to discuss further steps in the process.

This electronic message contains information generated by the USDA solely for the intended recipients. Any unauthorized interception of this message or the use or disclosure of the information it contains may violate the law and subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.

From: [Zinda, Landon](#)
To: [Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
Subject: Accepted: Call with Landon Zinda (Rep. Emmer) to discuss M-Opinion; Twin Metals, MN

From: [Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Zinda, Landon](#)
Subject: RE: Call with Landon Zinda (Rep. Emmer) to discuss M-Opinion; Twin Metals, MN
Date: Friday, April 13, 2018 4:01:54 PM

Apologies 888-844-9904

(b) (6) access code

From: Zinda, Landon [mailto:Landon.Zinda@mail.house.gov]
Sent: Friday, April 13, 2018 4:01 PM
To: Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC <Robyn.Whitney@osec.usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Call with Landon Zinda (Rep. Emmer) to discuss M-Opinion; Twin Metals, MN

Robyn, I'm having trouble getting through to this line. Is the number right?

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC [<mailto:Robyn.Whitney@osec.usda.gov>]
Sent: April 12, 2018 5:23 PM
To: Zinda, Landon; Casamassa, Glenn -FS; Roessing, Megan - FS; Flory, Suzanne C -FS; Thomas, Ryan - OSEC, Washington DC
Subject: Call with Landon Zinda (Rep. Emmer) to discuss M-Opinion; Twin Metals, MN
When: April 13, 2018 4:00 PM-4:30 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).
Where: 218-A
Importance: High

Conference line: 888-544-9904

Participant Access Code: (b) (6)

This call is to discuss the Forest Service process regarding the M-Opinion for Twin Metals Mine, MN. A further interagency coordination call will be set up in the coming weeks between USDA's Forest Service, Department of Interior and Representative Emmer's staff to discuss further steps in the process.

This electronic message contains information generated by the USDA solely for the intended recipients. Any unauthorized interception of this message or the use or disclosure of the information it contains may violate the law and subject the violator to civil or criminal penalties. If you believe you have received this message in error, please notify the sender and delete the email immediately.

From: [Zinda, Landon](#)
To: ken.barbic@osec.usda.gov; [Whitney, Robyn - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); Ryan.Thomas3@osec.usda.gov; [Crandall, Doug - lfchambers@fs.fed.us](#); sflory@fs.fed.us; gcasamassa@fs.fed.us
Subject: Coalition Letter on Withdrawal in Superior National Forest, Minnesota
Date: Monday, July 16, 2018 4:10:43 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[J4MN MiningMN RAMS on Status of Rescinding Withdrawal FINAL.pdf](#)

Happy Monday. Just making sure you see the letter from some of the more prominent groups today echoing the President's sentiments regarding the withdrawal application in Minnesota. Happy to discuss further.

Landon Zinda
Deputy Legislative Director
Congressman Tom Emmer (MN-06)
Office: (202) 225-2331
Sign up for Rep. Emmer's [Newsletter](#)





July 16, 2018

Office of the Secretary
Secretary Ryan Zinke
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Office of the Secretary
Secretary Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Zinke and Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the members of the coalition Jobs for Minnesotans, the industry association Mining Minnesota and the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), we are writing to follow up on our January 30, 2018 letter expressing our deep concerns about the outstanding mineral withdrawal proposal in northeastern Minnesota. The threat of this proposal has loomed over our region for far too long without action.

Last month, we welcomed President Trump to Duluth, Minnesota. He clearly understood the importance of mining to our region and we were pleased that he chose to speak with us about mining and jobs during a community roundtable. He expressed unbridled resolve in his remarks for the rescission of the mineral withdrawal proposal.

Yet, weeks after his visit, we have seen no formal indication from leadership within the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to rescind the mineral withdrawal proposal. This is despite evidence that Minnesotans do not support the proposal. In fact, according to a recent poll, the majority of voters across the state of Minnesota (64 percent) expressed trust that state and federal environmental agencies would ensure that mining is done safely and responsibly. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of Minnesota voters (70 percent) believe potential copper-nickel mining proposals in Minnesota should be allowed to go through the rigorous state and federal environmental review process and granted permits if environmental protection standards are met.

As we've mentioned in our previous correspondence, the economic opportunities from mining projects are significant – thousands of direct jobs, two times as many jobs in spinoff industries and billions of dollars to support K-12 education across the state. The emerging mining industry is an investment in the future well-being of our state and nation; with the withdrawal proposal looming over the region and the state, our future is at risk.

As noted in Deputy Secretary David Bernhardt's recent viewpoint in the *Duluth News Tribune* following the President's visit to our state, the DOI has taken strides to free up land in the Western United States to support exploration for minerals critical to our national security. We need similar action in Minnesota to support domestic production of these minerals from one of the largest untapped deposits of copper and nickel in the world.

JOBS FOR MINNESOTANS

Our organizations co-authored an article published in the *Mesabi Daily News* after the President's visit to Minnesota that echoes the above sentiments. We hope you will heed our call at the end of the letter to take immediate action to formalize the President's promises to the people of this state. We urge you to officially rescind this needless withdrawal proposal in favor of supporting a fair process.

Sincerely,

(b) (6)

Nancy Norr
Board Chair
Jobs for Minnesotans

(b) (6)

Frank Ongaro
Executive Director
MiningMinnesota

(b) (6)

Steve Giorgi
Executive Director
Range Association of Municipalities and Schools

Jobs for Minnesotans, a coalition representing business, labor and communities, supports statewide opportunities for prosperity and middle-class jobs from sustainable natural resource development in Minnesota. The organization is committed to the principle that our state can preserve both job opportunities and the environment for future generations. *Jobs for Minnesotans* was co-founded in 2012 by the Minnesota Building and Construction Trades Council representing 55,000 workers and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce representing 2,300 companies and 500,000 employees.

MiningMinnesota is an industrial trade organization made up of all nonferrous exploration and mineral development companies in Minnesota, along with approximately 100 supplier and vendor businesses, all committed to sustainable and environmentally responsible copper-nickel and PGM mineral development and mining in Minnesota.

Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) is comprised of 22 elected public officials from either a school district, a township board or a city council, along with two superintendents from a district within the boundaries of the Taconite Assistance Area of Northeastern Minnesota. The organization represents more than 72,000 residents and 49 public sector units of government, including 22 cities, 16 public school districts and 11 townships, in the 13,000 square mile Taconite Assistance Area (TAA) of northeast Minnesota.

Enclosures (2):

- *Duluth News Tribune* op-ed "Minnesota mining has big potential to put 'America first'"
- *Mesabi Daily News* op-ed "Time for federal agencies to follow the President's lead"

CC: Senator Klobuchar
Senator Smith
Representative Nolan
Representative Peterson
Representative Emmer
Representative Walz
Representative Gosar
Representative Lewis

Daniel Jiron, USFS
Glenn Casamassa, USFS
Kathleen Benedetto, BLM
Mitch Leverette, BLM
James E. Cason, DOI
Richard T. Cardinale, DOI
David Bernhardt, DOI
Connie Cummins, Superior National Forest



DULUTH News Tribune

Deputy Secretary of the Interior's View: Minnesota Mining Has Big Potential to Put 'America First'

By David Bernhardt

June 24, 2018

Minnesota is uniquely blessed with the mineral-resource wealth of the Iron Range. Ore from the Iron Range was fired and forged into the vast majority of the steel that supplied our nation during World War II. At that time the United States supplied over half of the world's steel. Today, our nation finds itself largely dependent upon foreign nations for many important resource needs, including critical minerals, despite our tremendous geological resources.

The Department of the Interior — which manages 20 percent of the acreage in the United States, or one in every five acres — is working hard to decrease this foreign dependence. Under the direction of President Donald Trump, Interior is focusing on economic development in rural America. Public lands throughout our nation have vast mineral resources that belong to every citizen in this country.

Minnesota is the largest producer of iron ore and taconite in the United States, and Minnesota's strong mining tradition continues today. Areas of Minnesota, notably the Duluth Complex, are known as among the world's largest undeveloped deposits of platinum group metals, a critical mineral group that is crucial to advancing our tech economy.

The previous presidential administration made it a priority to take a lot of these resources off the table. The Trump administration has changed course. On Dec. 20, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order to support domestic production of critical minerals. Under the bold leadership of President Trump and Secretary Ryan Zinke, Interior has reversed course, and we are all in on America.

Interior has freed up more than 10 million acres to mining exploration from California to Nevada that the last administration sought to close. In order to streamline permitting, Interior has proposed common-sense policies to reduce overly complicated and confusing, thousand-page environmental documents so they are more readable and better inform decision-making.

We have set aggressive goals to finish environmental analyses within one year on normal projects. Interior also has reduced permitting approval times by reforming our business processes. Documents do not simply sit for weeks or months on a bureaucrat's desk in Washington.

In the past, entities like the United States Geological Survey (USGS) used geospatial technology in countries like Afghanistan to identify potential mineral resources. Today, the Trump administration has moved these efforts back home to better identify domestic resources that belong to the American people.

From precision-guided missiles for our nation's military to computer chips in our cell phones, our reforms promote access to our nation's domestic resources so we do not have to depend on other countries for the minerals we need and already possess. As a nation, we can harness our resources to create job opportunities right now and power our vibrant economy.

Most importantly, access to such resources means more well-paying jobs for folks I met from small towns like Ely and Hibbing. I grew up in a community that was highly dependent on mining jobs, and I know firsthand that these jobs are well-paying jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average hourly salary for a mining employee is over \$30 per hour — while the average private, non-farm workforce hourly salary is about \$27 per hour. That translates to greater income and perhaps more time a worker can spend at home with his or her family rather than driving further away from home for work or working multiple jobs just to pay bills and get by.

According to USGS, the estimated value of mineral production in the United States today is \$75.2 billion, despite our being 100 percent reliant on countries like China for many of the minerals we need. Just imagine what enormous prosperity we could spark in rural communities by producing these resources right here.

It's time to change the game — and bring greater prosperity to rural America.

David Bernhardt is deputy secretary of the Interior. He wrote this exclusively for the News Tribune in the wake of President Donald Trump's visit to Duluth last week.

VIEWPOINT

Orchids to top court, SuperOne and flags

Orchids: To the Supreme Court ruling in the Janus case that found for the workers and against the Union bosses. Now workers have a choice whether to have their pay confiscated to pay union dues to a union that won't back them in the workplace and to use their dues money to support political candidates that won't back their way of life. Great day for the workers, not so much for the union bosses and the Democrats that relied on that dues money.

Orchids: To SuperOne for donating donuts to the Senior Scrambles at the Eveleth Golf Course. And Orchids to Bob Lind for all of the work he does to organize these fun events.

Orchids: How about everyone on Indiana Ave. W. in Gilbert fly the American flag for the Fourth of July. Starting today. Anyone else can sure do the same. God bless America.

Orchids: To everyone who volunteered, donated or participated



to the annual Sand Lake Shuffle for cancer survivors. A special thanks to the businesses and to the team and family members for their support and donations, to Rolly's Rangers teams. Yes, we will be back for our 23rd years. "It's a labor of love." We need more teams! (Submitted by Shirley Savela)

Orchids: The street lanes and turn arrows have just been repainted all across Virginia. Now we who live here and all the tourists who visit can see where to drive and turn. Good job city council by not waiting until late fall to get the painting done. Thank you much!

Orchids: It is wonderful to see the yellow traveling taco stand out and about. Stop and give the place a taste. Wow!

Orchids: The Friday fish fry at the Shack north of Virginia on 169 is quite a surprise. Give it a try. Very good eating!

Time for federal agencies to follow the president's lead

STEVE GIORGI

RAMS

NANCY NORR

JOB FOR MINNESOTANS

FRANK ONGARO

MININGMINNESOTA

Just over 500 days into his term, President Trump paid a visit to our region to talk mining and jobs. Last week in Duluth, he sat down with representatives of the industry that built and powered our region for generations. The day of the roundtable, the Mesabi Daily News published an editorial voicing its view that the President had the ability while in town to deliver on "his promise to rebuild blue collar jobs" by rescinding the mineral withdrawal proposal that continues to loom over the region.

The withdrawal proposal threatens to remove 234,000 acres of federal land from future mineral exploration and development. It also called for a 20-year ban on mining with a 2-year moratorium to study environmental impacts. The proposal threatens the livelihoods of families in the region since it has implications not only for copper-nickel mining but also iron mining.

During the President's roundtable discussion, he mentioned that his administration cut more federal red tape in 500 days than any before him did over any period of time. It's been more than 530.

days since the withdrawal was introduced. And the clock is ticking and investment continues to feel the chill of the proposed withdrawal.

Thankfully, and as this publication foreshadowed, the President stated his intention to rescind the mineral withdrawal proposal in favor of recognizing the salience of established environmental review processes. Since these processes were established, they have ensured that any proposed mining project upholds strict environmental and safety standards.

In addition to threatening our iron mining industry, mineral withdrawal would also leave untapped the vast copper-nickel mineral deposits that run beneath our feet and that support the green economy, national defense, healthcare and other industries.

In 1977, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimated that the Duluth Complex contained more than 4 billion tons of ore containing copper, nickel and platinum group metals resources. The very next year, Congress passed the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) Act, establishing specific lands outside the BWCAW as open to mineral development — and even encouraged it.

Rescinding the min-

eral withdrawal will NOT open more lands to mining, but rather keep these dedicated lands available for mining activity. It will also maintain the established, fair process for reviewing potential environmental impacts of mining AFTER projects are formally proposed. These processes are designed to protect our environment and preserve natural resource development opportunities that create lasting economic impact.

The companies that seek to mine these minerals would generate nearly \$3 billion in royalties benefitting the Minnesota Permanent School Trust Fund and supporting the education of 900,000 K-12 students statewide. The projects would employ thousands directly and indirectly with the mineral resources available to support this job creation for generations. These are the types of economic benefits the President promised to protect and bring back to the forefront during his campaign.

We thank the President for his strong words and promise to support mining. Now, let's not wait another 500 days — or even 100 days — to see the withdrawal proposal formally rescinded by the U.S. Forest Service. We are counting the days until federal agencies officially rescind this needless proposal in favor of supporting a fair process.

A big change happened in the Middle East

There was a monumental moment or two in the Middle East this past week that largely went unnoticed and under reported by many in the media.

Angry protesters in Iran were caught on camera loudly chanting "death to Palestine."

Not to Israel or America.

But to Palestine.

Those shouts and sentiments come amidst widespread unease there in the wake of President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers and restore economic sanctions on the country.

And while recent coverage of Trump's decision by newspapers like The New York Times paints a picture of a moderate regime ruling a citizenry filled with hatred for all things America, on the ground in Iran the truth is quite different.

For average Iranians the question is simple: Why is money that could be used at home being used to fund Palestine and terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah?

Blame for the country's economic woes is being placed squarely where it belongs: On the leadership of Iran.

Of course, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani sees it differently. On Tuesday he said his country is in a "fight" with the U.S. In a televised speech, Rouhani blamed the U.S. for Iran's current state and said the U.S. is trying to damage the country by creating "an economic war."

"The U.S. cannot defeat our nation, our enemies are not able to get us to their knees," he said.

But that's not the feeling amongst many Iranians in country and living in the United States.

Now you may ask yourself, how does a newspaper columnist from the Iron Range know what Iranians are thinking or saying?

In this global age, the truth is out there — you just have to dig a little to get at it.

In my case, I turn to Twitter where I can find actually Iranian people discussing the situation.

For example, due to various Tweets and re-tweets I came across a post by Dr. Amir Fassih, a neuroradiologist and author of Iranian decent living in California, who posted a video straight out of Iran taken by a person named Pouria Zeraati.

In that video protesters are chanting, "our enemies are right here, long live America."

According to an article in The Times of Israel, Monday's protests in Tehran and around the country — including economically hard-hit cities like Kermanshah in western Iran — also included shouts like "No to Gaza, no to Lebanon" and "Leave Syria and think of us."

Chants of "We don't want the ayatollahs" and "Death to the dictator" were also heard at some rallies.

Bold statements in a country where speaking ones mind most certainly can lead to imprisonment and possibly

death.

But the Iranian people have reason to be upset — while they starve and suffer, Iran uses its oil money to provide financial aid to Palestinian terror groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthi rebels and Shiite militias in Iraq.

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, various outlets report Tehran has poured an estimated \$6 billion into propping up president Bashar Assad's government.

Freeing up that kind of cash was much easier under the 2015 nuclear deal Iran struck with Obama and several other countries that led to long standing economic sanctions to be lifted in exchange for a slight curbing of Iran's nuclear programs.

As part of the Obama agreement, according to various reports, nearly \$56 billion in Iranian assets were unfrozen and the U.S. gave \$1.7 billion dollars to Iran to resolve an arms contract between the two countries that predated the Iranian revolution in 1979.

Basically, Iran paid for some military equipment way back when and never got it. They shelled out roughly \$400 million but got back the \$1.7 billion based on interest.

A recent investigation by Senate Republicans concluded that the Obama administration tried to get even more cash into the hands of Iranian leadership through some shady back room maneuvers.

According to the report, the Obama administration secretly sought to give Iran access to the U.S. financial system by sidestepping sanctions kept in place after the 2015 nuclear deal, despite repeatedly telling congress and the public it had no plans to do so.

According to various news reports, the report by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations revealed that under Obama, the Treasury Department issued a license in February 2016, never previously disclosed, that would have allowed Iran to convert \$5.7 billion it held at a bank in Oman from Omani rials into euros by exchanging them first into U.S. dollars.

If the Omani bank had allowed the exchange without such a license, it would have violated sanctions that bar Iran from transactions that touch the U.S. financial system.

According to officials, the effort was unsuccessful because American banks — themselves afraid of running afoul of U.S. sanctions — declined to participate. The Obama administration approached two U.S. banks to facilitate the conversion, the report said, but both refused, citing the reputational risk of doing business with or for Iran.

Thankfully, when Trump nixed the nuclear deal, the sanctions returned and the squeeze is once again.

Now, the people of Iran seem to be ready to make the next move and push for a change in leadership, knowing full well it is those leaders that have held them down not the United States.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Contribute to the conversations about the Iron Range by submitting a letter to the editor to jburnes@mesabidailynews.net. Include your full name, address and daytime telephone number. Only your name and the name of the city in which you live would be published.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ORCHIDS & ONIONS

Letters to the Editor can be emailed to the editor at jburnes@mesabidailynews.net; posted online at www.virginiamn.com; or brought into the newspaper at 704 7th Ave. S. They should be 300 words or less, if possible. But we err on the side of letting the writer have his/her say. There is no guarantee which day a letter will run in the newspaper.

Orchids & Onions — anonymous and with names — run on the MDN editorial page on Saturday and in the Sunday Opinion section. "Onions" will be monitored. If your "Onion" has not been published within a week, please contact the editor as to the reason why.

DOONESBURY by Garry Trudeau



From: [Western Caucus](#)
To: robyn.whitney@osec.usda.gov
Subject: Western Caucus and Trump Administration Reverse Obama Land Grab
Date: Friday, September 7, 2018 6:00:56 PM



For Immediate Release

Contact: Emilio Navarrete

Date: September 7, 2018

Emilio.Navarrete@mail.house.gov

Western Caucus and Trump Administration Reverse Obama Land Grab



WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressional Western Caucus Chairman **Paul Gosar (AZ-04)**, Chief Infrastructure and Forestry Officer **Bruce Westerman (AR-04)**, and Chief Rules Officer **Andy Biggs (AZ-05)**, and Western Caucus Members **Frank Lucas (OK-03)** and **Tom Emmer (MN-06)** released the following statements after the Trump Administration canceled the Obama Administration’s proposed land grab in Northern Minnesota:

Congressman Tom Emmer stated, “The Department of Agriculture’s move today [yesterday] to cancel the federal withdrawal is a major victory for Minnesota. My MINER Act demonstrated the strong bipartisan support that exists for unleashing our state’s full mining potential. Despite arguments that Washington should make these decisions for us, now, Minnesota’s mineral rights are finally restored back to the people of our great state. I am grateful to the President, Secretary Zinke, Secretary Purdue and the entire administration for their support in our efforts to fully restore Minnesota’s right to explore.”

Chairman Paul Gosar stated, “In the final days of the Obama Administration, President Obama used the arm of the federal government to lockup a large swath of land in Northern Minnesota. With one fell swoop, Washington bureaucrats deprived thousands of Minnesotans of good-paying jobs and economic prosperity for the sake of an extreme agenda. The truth is that we can protect our environment while securing robust growth within the region; this is not a zero sum situation. This decision accomplishes exactly that. I applaud President Trump, USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, and DOI Secretary Ryan Zinke for working with the Western Caucus to overturn President Obama’s Minnesota land grab. This is a historic win for the Caucus and the people of Minnesota.”

Congressman Bruce Westerman said, “Unilateral decision making has no place in federal land management. When Washington bureaucrats pass down sweeping regulations to please special interests, they ignore the needs and the expertise of the local communities who survive off of these lands. We see time and time again that local control results in the best management, more family-wage jobs, and the greatest prosperity for local economies. I am pleased with USDA’s decision to cancel the Obama-era land withdrawal in the Superior National Forest. It is a win for Minnesotans, and a win for those who believe that Americans have the right to manage their own backyard. I applaud Secretary Purdue for prioritizing local control and want to thank the Trump Administration for putting local economies first in their decision making.”

Congressman Andy Biggs stated, “The previous administration’s regulatory overreach harmed

countless Americans, including many around Minnesota's Superior National Forest. By canceling the political regulation for this region, President Trump and his administration have taken another bold step that will produce jobs and sustain a booming economy for the American people. I applaud Congressman Emmer and Chairman Gosar for winning this fight."

Congressman Frank Lucas said, "I applaud USDA's announcement that they are canceling the application for the Rainy River Watershed Withdrawal. This withdraw application was a last ditch effort by the Obama administration to stop the people of Minnesota from developing this land for the next twenty years. If allowed to continue, this withdraw would have done incredible harm to the local economies that depend on this projected development. I thank Secretary Perdue and Congressman Emmer for their leadership on this issue."

Background:

On September 6th, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, specifically the U.S. Forest Service, announced that it has canceled the application for the Rainy River Watershed Withdrawal, which would have drastically impeded mining in Northern Minnesota and caused significant harm to local economies.

To see the 9/6/18 letter from Northeastern Area and Regional Forester Kathleen Atkinson making this announcement click [HERE](#).

Under the December 14, 2016 withdrawal application, approximately 234,000 acres of federal land in the Superior National Forest was proposed to be removed from mineral leasing laws for a 20-year period, immediately placing this vast area off limits to development for up to two years while the 20-year withdrawal was considered. The total withdrawal application boundary spanned approximately 425,000 acres, including 95,000 acres of state school trust fund lands.

17,000 jobs, \$3 billion for education, \$1.5 billion in annual wages, \$2.5 billion annually for our economy and a total of four billion tons of strategic-and-critical-mineral-containing ore were at risk if the withdrawal application was not canceled. The Obama Administration's arbitrary termination of two hardrock mineral leases and politicized mining withdrawal – coming only the day before President Obama left office – aimed to set a terrible precedent for sweeping executive power grabs that could threaten the livelihoods of communities throughout the country.

Congress passed two separate laws authorizing mining in the Superior National Forest, and the 1986 Forest Service and 2004 Forest Plans both concluded that mining is 'a desired condition.' No one is proposing to mine in the 1.1 million acre Boundary Waters Wilderness Area, an area that already has significant buffers, and mining in the forest will occur only after job creators have gone through the full NEPA environmental process.

An awesome video produced by the people of Minnesota on these issues can be viewed [HERE](#).

In June of 2017, Reps. Gosar, Emmer, Westerman and Nolan toured several mining operations, held a stakeholder meeting and visited the proposed federal withdrawal area. The comments they heard on the ground from American families, businesses and individuals who want good-paying jobs and support mining projects in the area led to a Congressional effort to overturn the Obama Administration's land grab.

Accordingly, Members of the Western Caucus took several actions to reverse the previous administration's proposed mineral withdrawal including:

- A press release and letter signed by 26 Members calling for rescission of the 234,328-acre

mineral withdrawal application and renewal of two improperly terminated leases can be found [HERE](#).

- An Interior Appropriations Request signed by 9 members including House Committee on Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop can be viewed [HERE](#).
- The press release on the Natural Resources hearing on H.R.3905 can be found [HERE](#).
- A press story on Rep. Emmer's Interior Appropriations Amendment passing the House can be found [HERE](#).
- A press release on passage of H.R. 3905 through the House of Representatives can be found [HERE](#).
- A press release and letter supported by more than 50 Members and Stakeholders calling on the Trump Administration to review the 30+ mineral withdrawals from the Obama Administration can be found [HERE](#).

###

As always, you can follow everything Western Caucus on our [Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



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From: [MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Armstrong, Katherine E -FS](#); [Campbell, Christopher M -FS](#); [Marklund, Christopher](#)
Subject: FW: Twin Metals
Date: Thursday, January 31, 2019 2:16:47 PM

Chris/Katie – Just got this request from Emmer's office. They were looking for information from the FS on lease stipulations for the Twin metals project. Was wondering if we could setup a call with them on Monday or Tuesday?

From: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2019 1:52 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Cc: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Subject: Twin Metals

Hey Rob,

I was hoping to hop on a call regarding the Twin Metals Minnesota lease renewal at some point over the next few days. Happy to work with your schedule or to coordinate if you're on the hill anytime soon. Also cc'ing my counterpart in Stauber's office, who may want join. You mentioned someone from Natural Resources switched over to you guys recently. He(?) is welcome to join as well.

Best,

Nick

Nick Lunneborg
Senior Legislative Assistant
The Office of Congressman Tom Emmer
(202)225-2331 (o), (b) (6)

Sign up for Rep. Emmer's [Newsletter here](#).

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From: [MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Lunneborg, Nicholas](#); [Morley, Andrew](#)
Subject: RE: Twin Metals
Date: Friday, February 8, 2019 5:08:36 PM

No worries, glad it was helpful. Have a good weekend.

From: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 8, 2019 4:55 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>; Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: Twin Metals

Thanks again for putting the call together, Rob. We'll be in touch for any follow-up. See you on Monday.

From: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2019 10:59 AM
To: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: Twin Metals

It's a nightmare. 3:30 it is...call in info below.

888-844-9904, (b) (6)

From: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 10:10 AM
To: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>; MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Twin Metals

I think Andrew knows a thing or two about the permitting issues going on over there. How does 3:30pm work on Friday? Thanks for putting this together, Rob.

From: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2019 10:08 AM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>; Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: Twin Metals

Hey guys

I'm pretty open Friday – Let me know what works for you.

Andrew

From: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 10:04 AM
To: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Cc: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: Twin Metals

Hey guys – Just heard back from FS on this. Kathleen Atkinson, Regional Forester, and Shawn Olson, Regional Minerals Director can do a call this Friday if that works for you all?

Sorry we couldn't schedule this sooner, but that regional office has had permitting issues they had to attend to.

Let me know,

Rob

From: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2019 1:52 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Cc: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Subject: Twin Metals

Hey Rob,

I told you [REDACTED] (b) (6) on Monday I'd be lobbying you soon. I just didn't expect it to be this soon. Not lobbying you per se, but hoping to hop on a call regarding the Twin Metals Minnesota lease renewal at some point over the next few days. Happy to work with your schedule or to coordinate if you're on the hill anytime soon. Also cc'ing my counterpart in Stauber's office, who may want to join. You mentioned someone from Natural Resources switched over to you guys recently. He(?) is welcome to join as well.

Best,

Nick

Nick Lunneborg
Senior Legislative Assistant
The Office of Congressman Tom Emmer
(202)225-2331 (o), [REDACTED] (b) (6)

Sign up for Rep. Emmer's Newsletter [here](#).

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From: [MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Morley, Andrew](#)
Cc: [Lunneborg, Nicholas](#); [Koetzle, Desiree](#)
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations
Date: Friday, March 1, 2019 3:37:35 PM

Will check with him.

From: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 3:35 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Cc: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations

Would we be able to chat with yourself and Chris Marklund? I think it would be helpful to see where him and Secretary Hubbard are at on it.

Thanks so much!

From: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 3:22 PM
To: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Cc: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations

Of course, who did you all want to speak with specifically?

From: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 2:47 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Cc: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: TMM Stipulations

Hey Rob

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Thanks

Andrew Morley
Legislative Assistant
Congressman Pete Stauber (MN-08)
202.225.6211 | 126 Cannon HOB
Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov

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From: [Morley, Andrew](#)
To: [MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
Cc: [Lunneborg, Nicholas](#); [Koetzle, Desiree](#)
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations
Date: Friday, March 1, 2019 4:02:21 PM

Works for me

From: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 3:55 PM
To: Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Cc: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations

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Cc: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
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From: [Koetzle, Desiree](#)
To: [MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Lunneborg, Nicholas](#); [Morley, Andrew](#)
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations
Date: Friday, March 1, 2019 5:31:23 PM

I will join, too. Thanks Rob.

Have a good weekend, gents.

From: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 4:04 PM
To: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>; Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Cc: Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations

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From: Lunneborg, Nicholas <Nicholas.Lunneborg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2019 4:02 PM
To: MacGregor, Robert – OSEC, Washington, DC <Robert.MacGregor2@usda.gov>; Morley, Andrew <Andrew.Morley@mail.house.gov>
Cc: Koetzle, Desiree <Desiree.Koetzle@mail.house.gov>
Subject: RE: TMM Stipulations

I'll make it work. Appreciate it, Rob.

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